

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Victim Researcher-Practitioner Collaborations

What is an MOU?

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a written document that outlines terms of an agreement for a partnership between two or more parties—in this case, a victim service provider and a victim researcher embarking on a collaboration. Typically, an MOU—also referred to as a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA)—is not a legally-binding contract, although it may have legal implications depending on the nature of the agreement and requirements of the partner organizations. As a result, it may warrant review by an attorney, other authorizing body, or individual within your agency.

What are the benefits of MOUs for Researcher-Practitioner Collaborations?

Victim researcher-practitioner collaborations can be strengthened through the collaborative process of developing an MOU. An MOU is useful for clarifying each partner's roles and responsibilities with respect to the collaboration's activities. Researchers and practitioners can work together to craft an MOU that outlines agreed-upon terms, allowing them to negotiate potentially complicated issues that may arise in the collaboration process, including those related to goals of the work.

The MOU can specify protections that will promote victims' safety and privacy in the research process, and outline the nature of the data collection that might take place, who owns the data, and how it will be used. As terms are clarified during the development process, the MOU can promote openness within the relationship between researchers and practitioners and foster a shared sense of ownership of the work.

The Value of MOUs

- **Clarify** roles and responsibilities
- **Outline** terms of agreement
- **Address** complicated issues, including data collection and use
- **Establish** victim protections
- **Promote** openness and shared ownership of the work

What information is included in an MOU?

MOUs include the unique details that reflect a specific agreement between partners and common elements that can be adapted for any partnership agreement. Elements that may be found in an MOU for victim researcher-practitioner collaborations include the following:

1. *Statement of the MOU's purpose:* This section clarifies the reason for the partnership agreement.
2. *Identification of the parties:* An MOU might be made between two or more parties, and this section states the specific individuals and organizations between whom the agreement is made and will sign the MOU.
3. *Time limit for the MOU's terms:* The MOU should clarify dates of the agreement. If there is no specific end date to the partnership, then it is useful to specify times when terms of the agreement will be revisited and resigned, to address possible modifications as the partnership moves forward.
4. *Detailed description of each partner's roles and responsibilities:* This section is the core of the MOU and outlines each party's unique contributions to the partnership. These contributions should be as specific as possible to ensure all parties have a clear understanding of who will be responsible for various tasks involved in the work of the partnership.

5. *Activity-specific provisions:* Additional sections of the MOU may be included to address the following issues, if required by the partners' organizations and/or if relevant to the activities addressed in the MOU:
 - a. Provisions for the safety and privacy of victims who are affiliated with the partners as clients and/or research participants
 - b. Financial terms of the partnership, if applicable
 - c. How data may be collected and used
 - d. Intellectual property terms of the partnership, including how any public-facing documents will be developed, produced, and attributed/authored
 - e. Any disclaimers required by partners and/or organizations they represent
6. *Statement describing how the MOU's terms can be negated or modified, if warranted, as the partnership evolves*
7. *Section for signatures and dates of signing the MOU*

Additional Resources

The Center for Victim Research offers **free technical assistance** to victim service providers with research questions, including help developing an MOU. Email TA@victimresearch.org for help.



The Community Tool Box from the University of Kansas offers useful tools that could support the process of developing an MOU, such as tools on [developing multisector collaborations](#) and [sharing positions and other resources](#).



[The Collaborative Center for Health Equity at the University of Wisconsin-Madison](#) provides an overview of university-community partnership MOUs, along with a template and samples.



The Anschutz Family Foundation in Colorado has created an 11-page [Collaboration Toolkit on Creating an MOU](#) that provides a comprehensive overview of the steps involved in developing an MOU.

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